RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS: THE FIGHT IS OVER, TIME TO IMPLEMENT
The vision for decarbonising the European building stock is clear enough: now comes the time for the member states to enforce these commitments.

It is up to national governments to implement in their own legislation updated rules imposed by the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) but also to lead regional and municipal authorities that need to put in force the directive at local level.

The risk of the directive being ineffective is high if countries don’t enforce it correctly: long-term renovations strategies will provide a test for proper implementation and will set the path for decarbonising the building stock by 2050 to nearly-zero energy standards.
French MP: Building renovation needs to get everyone on board

Time to deliver: Putting building renovation into practice

Please don’t let climate targets be (deliberately) misunderstood

REDay2018: key outputs from the conference
French MP:
Building renovation needs to get everyone on board

By Gerardo Fortuna | EURACTIV.com

To succeed in renovating the European building stock by 2050, all the governance levels need to be involved, from local to national, French MP Marjolaine Meynier-Millefert told EURACTIV, adding that people who cannot afford the costs of renovation must not be left behind.

Marjolaine Meynier-Millefert is a member of French Parliament with La République En Marche. She represents the French National Assembly to the Higher Council for Building and Energy Efficiency.

She spoke to EURACTIV’s Gerardo Fortuna on the sidelines of the REDay2018, held in Brussels on 9 October.

First, I would like to ask you for a quick comment from a national perspective on the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). Do you think it is ambitious enough?

I would say it is already ambitious, but I think we are never ambitious enough knowing how and at what rate the climate is changing. We see reports showing that the urgency of actions becomes bigger every passing...
day. The EPBD is a huge fast step and we need to get this one done so that we can be more ambitious later on.

And I am here today to explain what we are doing in France and to share our experience with other member states and other actors in Europe so that we can compare and improve our own politics.

**What kind of tools could France offer to other countries as best practices to achieve higher energy efficiency for building stocks by 2050?**

We developed a lot of interesting tools, but one that actually works very well is the white certificates scheme. It amounts to €5 billion euro that are directed toward renovations in France, focusing especially on poor people. Of course, it is a scheme that needs to be improved, maybe making it more efficient and more transparent, but it’s something that’s really interesting to keep doing.

Also, the energy audit is one tool that could quickly boost the rate of energy renovation across Europe. We need to give every house in Europe a sort of roadmap indicating what is the status of the house and where they need to go by 2050 if we want nearly zero energy consumption and zero carbon in our homes.

**And what exactly have you been working on now?**

We want now to work on schools, for instance. It’s a good win-win situation: we want to renovate school buildings fast because it is also a way to educate children to save energy.

**Now it’s up to you, national MPs and governments, to implement in your own legislation the updated rules. Do you think there will be some difficulties in coordinating renovations at the local level?**

We have to get everyone on board. In France, we have the problem that there are lots of actors dealing with renovation in general. We are working on different levels which they don’t really communicate well with each other. That’s why we launched in September a national campaign called “FAIRE”, which is a call to action with a big main idea: getting everyone to work together. Only in this way we would bring all scales from the towns to the regions to the national level together and work in the same direction.

**And it could also be an opportunity to boost innovation at the local level.**

Of course, and I would give you an example from where I am from, a little town between Lyon, Grenoble and Chambery. There are two big actors specialised in cement, Vicat and Lafarge, and they created a fertile environment for other businesses. In this Eastern part of France is concentrated some kind of 80% of all innovation made in the building sector, also for the transition saving energy and low carbon. So it brings more economic, especially in the building sector.

**What impact do you think the implementation of the national long renovation strategies would have on people’s lives?**

It’s a simple question: people have a very direct impact from poorly insulated homes. For instance, almost 20% of people in France more feel like they are cold in their homes during the winter. Together with the fact that older people and children feel too warm in summer, it underlines that there is a direct health problem that derives from badly renovated homes.

**Energy poverty is another issue that the EPBD tried to address.**

With a certain kind of public the directive is addressed to, we need to be very present from the beginning to the end of the renovation works. We have to accompany people from the very beginning of the energy audit of their homes and then we have to take them step-by-step through all the stages until the building is fully renovated. You can not leave them alone on that path. That’s one of the main difficulties we will face because accompanying people through this path costs money. But at the same time, if you don’t do it, there will be no results.

Finally, we have all seen the recent IPCC report on global warming. Could building renovation also help address this challenge?

The numbers speak for themselves. In France, for example, almost half of the final energy is used by the building sector, generating about a quarter of the greenhouse emissions. If we want to have an impact on the environment, we have to work on this sector as well.
Addressing energy poverty and developing new financial tools to boost energy savings are two things governments could do in practice to go beyond the targets outlined in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and start renovating the European building stock for real.

The EPBD targets are tough but clear enough and it’s now up to member states to enforce these commitments. The risk of the directive being ineffective is high if countries and local authorities do not enforce it correctly.

“The EPBD was only the first step on the road to make our European building stock better,” said the Parliament’s rapporteur on the EPBD, Bendt Bendtsen, during REDay2018, passing symbolically the mantle from EU policymakers to national authorities in charge of implementing it.

Around 200 million buildings need to be renovated before 2050 if Europe wants to keep on track, according to the Renovate Europe platform, a campaign group. The current rate of deep energy renovation stands at 0.15% on average across the 28 EU member states while it should reach 3% per year in order to meet the EPBD targets, it says.

When it comes to the directive’s implementation, the attention is now turning on Long-Term Renovation Strategies (LTRs) that all member states must introduce by 19 March 2020.

The two biggest tests for national LTRs is how they will treat energy poverty and the development of new financial tools to support buildings retrofitting.

The two topics are actually interrelated, as low-cost loans and specific advisory services could help who suffers fuel poverty to afford the costs of home renovations.

“Public money is not enough,” said Bendt Bendtsen, stressing the need for a multi-financial framework being able to allocate more private money on renovating buildings.

FRANCE: SPEEDING UP BUT NOT ON TRACK YET

“In France, things are speeding up, but we are not on track yet,” said Marjolaine Meynier-Millefert, Continued on Page 7
Continued from Page 6

a member of Parliament with La République En Marche (LREM) and appointed co-chief of the country’s building renovation plan in November 2017.

The average performance of the French building stock in terms of energy consumption per square meter is one of the worst in Europe. This puts the issue of building renovation among the top priorities in France’s energy efficiency roadmap.

The expected budget for this plan amounts to €14 billion over five years, of which €4.8 billion are needed to renovate public buildings.

“We already have energy performance certificates that assess building performance and they recently become an element of patrimonial value,” Meynier said, adding that an A-rated building could lead to an additional surcharge of 10% on the initial price of a property.

According to the French MP, only 1-2% of the building stocks have reached the A performance level on an A to G scale. The long-awaited building passport should have a positive impact in improving the energy performance of the building stock.

The French government renovation plan will also pay attention to the training of retrofitting practitioners. “We have a quality label certification scheme for professionals that we are reinforcing to make sure that while we are improving in quantity, we are not reducing our quality standard,” she explained.

SCOTLAND: EXPANDING TO THE ABLE-TO-PAY MARKET

Energy efficiency has been an infrastructure priority for the Scottish government since 2015, when the First Minister launched a 20-year roadmap to make Scottish homes efficient, warmer and more environmentally friendly.

Local authorities play a big role in reaching these objectives, offering an integrated approach and expanding into the able-to-pay market.

Energy poverty is a major concern and at the same time, one of the drivers of building renovation: Around 23-25% of homes in Scotland are faced with this condition. Two national programmes have recently been developed with a view to cutting energy poverty to 4-5% by 2050 – “warmer home Scotland” and the fuel poverty Scotland bill.

Tackling energy poverty also means focusing on area-based programmes and local heat and energy efficiency strategies.

From a point of view of energy performance certification, the Scottish government’s goal is to bring all buildings to C performance level at least by 2040, said Craig Egner, a senior policy advisor of the Scottish government.

FINANCIAL TOOLS

EU member states must also ensure that public subsidies lead to energy savings for renovating houses, as well as triggering private investments.

A French law already provides a 30% tax credit for the residential sector – without income requirements – in order to assist tenants for chasing efficient material and equipment to limit energy consumption.

“This measure was actually so popular that we now need to rethink it as it largely exceeded the budget we had intended at the beginning,” said French MP Meynier.

In 2015 alone, almost 1.2 million households use the tax credit. “Some modifications are undergoing but it still remains one of our most effective devices,” she said.

France also reduced the value-added tax for the residential sector from the normal 20% rate to 5.5% for building retrofitting works.

There is also an energy saving obligation scheme, the so-called “white certificates” for both residential and non-residential, which counts on a public budget of €5 billion available for pushing direct or indirect energy savings.

Following the same logic as the EU carbon market, the scheme obliges energy retailers and suppliers to meet specific energy savings targets. When they exceed their target, they need to buy credits worth the same amount.

“It is a good thing and it puts a significant pressure on the system, but we need to work on making that scheme more effective and the attribution of white certificates more transparent,” Meynier said.

“We’re working very closely with local authorities and we have run a number of pilot projects with them asking to hit energy efficiency strategy,” said Craig Egner outlining some financial tools like domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency loans.

One of this non-domestic tools, the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme (SEELS) provides funding for schools to reduce energy costs through the installation of energy efficiency technology. It is an interest-free loan funded by the Department for Education which is paid back through the predicted savings on energy usage.

There is also a loan specifically designed to support the development of district heating networks, offering low-interest loans to both renewable and low carbon technologies, with a 10-year payback and competitive interest rates.
THE AGREEMENTS ON THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE EU CLEAN ENERGY PACKAGE WERE HARD FOUGHT, BUT THEIR SIGNING MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE BATTLE TO IMPLEMENT THEM, AS MUCH AS IT DOES THE END OF THE STRUGGLE TO AGREE THEM!

Adrian Joyce is the Secretary General of EuroACE and campaign director of Renovate Europe.

In part that is because debates are continuing in Europe over the ambition we can afford to show in our climate policy in the years to 2030 – and beyond. It is also because the costs of not acting now could soon overwhelm our ability to act at all, as recent studies alarmingly highlight.

Europe’s climate package has settled a direction of travel – and a shared destination – but it also left questions aplenty about how best to make the journey. Those are the questions we need to talk about now.

Despite the EU’s progress in reining in emissions, the percentage of energy guzzled by buildings has stubbornly remained stable over the course of this century. Of late, it has begun heading upwards again, despite significant
policy developments in the field at EU level. At present, Brussels and Dublin (Dun Laoghaire Rathdown) are the only European cities that we know where all renovations have to be carried out to exceed minimum national energy efficiency standards and thus match up to the recently adopted vision for 2050 for our building stock.

That’s why the measures agreed in triilogue to ensure that long-term renovation strategies set the direction, purpose and accountability of Member States in the revised EPBD are so important. Essentially these strategies will be roadmaps with an action plan on how to transform a country’s building stock by 2050, including decarbonising it, to nearly-zero energy standards. They will have to include measurable progress indicators, milestones for the years 2030 and 2040, and explainers for how they fit into overall national energy and climate plans. The strategies must also list policies and actions targeting the worst performing building stock – and public buildings – and they should reference trigger points in a building’s life and possibly use building renovation passports to stimulate timely, cost-effective energy renovations.

It’s laudable stuff but there is many a slip twixt cup and lip! A policy – any policy – is only as good as the efforts authorities put into implementing it. For long-term renovation strategies, they face many questions now:

- What kind of consultation will Member States undertake with various stakeholders before deciding policy on their renovation strategies?
- How will policy decisions filter down from national government to the local and city authorities that implement them?
- How will those authorities prioritise energy efficiency in buildings, when faced with issues like low carbon mobility, renewables or recycling commitments?
- How persuasive will regional development and housing departments be when confronted with disengaged or disinterested treasury ministries?

More than anything, are the EU Member States, their regions and cities going to walk the talk on reducing the billions of tonnes of carbon emissions that seep from our leaky buildings every year? Because really these questions all boil down to one:

**ARE WE SERIOUS ABOUT TRYING TO PREVENT A CLIMATE CATASTROPHE AND READY TO PUT ENERGY RENOVATION FIRST?**

Reader, if you are, you can hear more about the issues at our annual high-level Renovate Europe Conference in the European Parliament today. And if you can’t make it, look out for our communications on its outcome!
The amended Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) contains a vision for 2050 for the buildings stock in the EU – it will have to be highly energy efficient and decarbonised, reaching cost-effective nearly zero energy levels.

As a result, it is time for action across all governance levels and the Member States will need to be armed with all the right tools and resources to achieve this challenging and necessary vision. This year’s Renovate Europe event looked at how to plan for the successful achievement of this 2050 vision.
For information on EURACTIV Event Reports...

Contact us

Davide Patteri
Public Affairs Senior Manager
davide.patteri@euractiv.com
tel. +32 (0)2 788 36 74

Gerardo Fortuna
Reporter
gerardo.fortuna@euractiv.com
tel. +32 (0)2 788 36 69